

Saint Patrick,

You loved those who had wronged you. May I have the love to forgive those who have wronged me.

You returned to Ireland, to serve people who had enslaved you. May I have the courage to trust God in situations that I have not planned.

You learned about the culture of those you lived with. May I be open to learning from those around me whose backgrounds are different from mine.

St Patrick, pray for us.

Amen.

A thought to take away

St Patrick returned to the country of his captors. Would you be so willing to help people who have hurt you? How easy is it to forgive?

An action to complete

- St Patrick learned the language of his captors. Learn a few words of greeting in another language and use them when you can.

*Saint Patrick
Pray for us*



Feast Day

17 March

Birthplace

Bannavem Taburniae, possibly Kilpatrick, near Dumbarton, Scotland

Born

Date unknown, around 387

Died

17 March, around 461

Canonised

There was no formal process of canonisation in place when Patrick died; he was proclaimed a saint by popular acclaim

Patron saint of

Ireland, Nigeria, engineers and paralegals (among others)



*Those who sow
with tears will
reap with songs
of joy.*

”

It is appropriate that one of the readings for the feast day of St Patrick (1 Peter 4:7-11) speaks of love, which St Patrick exemplified:

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms.”

What gift do you have that you could use to serve others?

The life of St Patrick

As with many other early saints, we know little about St Patrick for certain, although we do have two letters that he wrote. Patrick was born a Roman Briton. His parents were Calpurnius, a deacon, and Conchessa. It is believed that, when he was about 16, he was captured by a raiding party and was taken as a slave to Ireland, where he herded sheep for six years. During that time he learned the language and customs of the Druid people who lived there.

Shortly before escaping, Patrick had a vision that he would soon return home. He escaped, walked 200 miles to a port, and returned to his family in Britain. In a dream, however, he heard the people of Ireland calling him, "We beg you, holy youth, to come and walk among us once more."

Patrick trained as a priest, and later became a bishop. He returned to Ireland to seek reconciliation and to spread the Gospel. Many people, including kings and their families, converted to Christianity, and Patrick and his disciples built many churches, and helped to establish Christianity in Ireland.

St Patrick is well known for explaining the doctrine of the Trinity using a shamrock: the little leaf has three parts, and yet is one; in the same way God is three persons, and is still one God.

St Patrick is known as a humble and gentle man who loved God deeply. He feared nothing, not even death, because of his trust in God.

He died in Saul, where he had built the first church. He is believed to be buried in Downpatrick, in Northern Ireland.

There is a famous prayer known as the Breastplate of St Patrick, which is believed to have been used by St Patrick and his followers to pray for protection as they travelled across Ireland. Part of this prayer reads:

**Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.**

CAFOD's work in Nigeria

St Patrick is also the patron saint of Nigeria. Faced with fighting between different religious and ethnic groups, CAFOD's partner, the Archdiocese of Jos, has set up the Dialogue, Reconciliation and Peace (DREP) Centre. This is a quiet, serene and neutral place where different groups can meet in order to discuss their differences and resolve their disagreements. Chris Ogbonna, 29, is a volunteer at the DREP Centre. Here, he describes why he is involved.



A peace-building workshop.

"I am among the pool of 15 volunteers, mixed by faith, gender and ethnicity, that have been trained in areas of conflict resolution. A regular dialogue meeting is held by community and religious leaders at the DREP centre.

After narrowly escaping an attack during the 7 September 2001 crisis, I never imagined that I could come face to face with groups of people with different religious perspectives. My encounter with DREP changed this. It made me understand that it is better to listen and even start a dialogue with people who are doing what is believed to be wrong.

I can confidently visit my Muslim friends in a community I was forced to vacate during the crisis, and even wish to live among them again.



Chris presenting a certificate to a participant at the DREP workshop.

I have learned, and now preach, the principle of understanding our difference and appreciating our diversity while we focus on what we have in common.

We are working to promote dialogue between communities, exchanging visits and starting up joint projects with Christian and Muslim communities. We hope that this will help in promoting trust and building confidence.

Like St Patrick, who suffered greatly as a slave in Ireland, and later returned as a bishop to proclaim the good news, the Church, DREP and her volunteers have returned to work with those from whom they have suffered violence.

I now have a rock-like belief in the work of reconciliation and peace-building."

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